

The Senior CHIT★CHAT

WINTER 2010



A Publication for Precinct2gether from Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia

Celebrating the Holidays in Precinct2gether style!

In 2007, Precinct2gether debuted a new type of holiday party. Instead of the traditional gathering, seniors had the chance to entertain their friends with a holiday-themed theatrical variety production. The event, titled "Holiday2gether," was met with such great enthusiasm and reviews that a second production, "Precinct2ville," was produced in 2009 and the "Precinct2gether 12 Days of Christmas" will debut this December.

A new twist on the Precinct2gether holiday production is that not only will seniors be involved with the production but the community centers directors and coordinators also are taking part in the show. "I am so excited and proud of the community center directors and our staff for participating as they are great sports," said Bobbie Yarbrough, a community center aide at the Barrett Station and Riley Chambers Community Center who has written and produced the three Precinct2gether holiday dramas. "This year's show also will be more action than words giving our seniors the opportunity to really show their imagination skills. Our senior actors will use much movement and expression which is very helpful for their overall well being. I know this is going to be a very funny, memorable event that both our cast and the audience will enjoy."

In addition to the "12 Days of Christmas," the holiday event also will include a dance with music provided by a DJ.

"12 Days of Christmas" will be shown at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 10, at the Bay Area Community Center, 5002 NASA Parkway. A free ticket is required to attend a performance. Please contact your area senior program coordinator or community center director regarding ticket availability.



Check out what's inside...

- **Precinct2gether calendar of events, page 2**
- **Things to know, page 4**
- **Ceramic Arts, page 5**
- **Homebound Road Tour, page 7**

WINTER

Mark Your Calendar

Following are some events for seniors taking place during December, January and February. If the event is hosted at one of Harris County Precinct Two's community centers, the center's name follows the activity. An * indicates this event is not at a Precinct Two community center:

Monthly Birthday Celebrations

Second Tuesday: San Jacinto

Third Thursday: Barrett, Walker

Last Wednesday: Flukinger, Grayson, North East

December

Dec. 6 Joint South Channel Council Meeting, Bay Area

Dec. 10 Precinct-2gether Christmas Party, Bay Area

Dec. 14 Lyondell-Basell Nursing Home Party, BayPort*

Dec. 15 Winter Party, Flukinger

Dec. 16 End-of-Year Party, Baldree Building

Dec. 17 Christmas Dinner & Party, Walker

Dec. 17 Hometown Opry "Christmas Show," EHCAC

Dec. 21 Gospel Night, Grayson

January

Jan. 7 Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

Jan. 11 Gospel Night, San Jacinto

Jan. 18 Gospel Night, Grayson

Jan. 20 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex*

Jan. 21 Food Fair, San Jacinto

Jan. 21 Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC

Jan. 26 Inner City Birthday Valentine Lunch, North East

Jan. 27 Precinct-2gether Domino Tournament, Grayson

Jan. 28 Hometown Opry, EHCAC

February

Feb. 3 Gospel Night, Flukinger

Feb. 3 Valentine Party, Baldree Building

Feb. 4 Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

Feb. 6 Super Bowl Party, EHCAC

Feb. 7 South Channel Council Meeting, Bay Area & EHCAC

Feb. 8 Gospel Night, San Jacinto

Feb. 11 Inner City Valentine Party, EHCAC

Feb. 14 Valentine Party, Barrett

Feb. 14 Valentine & Senior Birthday Party, Walker

Feb. 14 Valentine Party, San Jacinto

Feb. 14 Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC

Feb. 14-18 Black History Program, Barrett

Feb. 15 Gospel Night, Grayson

Feb. 16 Black History Speaker, North East

Feb. 16 Sweetheart Banquet, Flukinger

Feb. 17 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex*

Feb. 25 Black History Program, Walker

Feb. 25 Hometown Opry, EHCAC

Feb. 26 Houston Rodeo Parade, Downtown Houston*

About the Chit-Chat:

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Community Center Dances: Proceeds benefit Precinct2gether, Inc.

Second Thursday: Grayson in December & February

Third Tuesday: Bay Area (ballroom dancing) in December & February

Third Thursday: East Harris County (EHCAC) (country-and-western dancing)

Every Friday: San Jacinto - Music and Dancing (Free)

A Message from Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner *Sylvia R. Garcia*

I am proud to have served as your Harris County Commissioner for the past eight years. I have kept my promise and built upon the foundation, brick by brick, that was entrusted to me as Precinct Two County Commissioner.

Precinct2gether was formed to bring together the youth, seniors and veterans program under one umbrella with the goal of Building Communities for a Better Tomorrow. Along the way relationships and partnerships have grown and I am proud of the work we have done. We have held food fairs, hosted veterans' picnics, made transportation vouchers available and provided workshops to help seniors understand the new Medicare prescription drug program. Let's not forget together we weathered Hurricane Ike and its aftermath.

We enhanced all of our programs and met more needs through increased community support and involvement, volunteers, fundraising and grants.

As the year draws to a close, it is once again my great pleasure to be on stage with the seniors for the annual Christmas production. The relationships I have formed with all of you will be forever treasured and the lessons I have learned by participating in your activities and your lives are immeasurable and invaluable.

God Bless you all!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sylvia R. Garcia".

Putting on the Ritz!



Pictured with Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia (front row, second from right) are Wal-Mart's Vic Pina, Angela Wilson, Curtis Tipton and (back row) Travis Grasha and Randy Hicks.

It was an evening of glamour and good times as friends and supporters of Precinct2gether attended the seventh annual Black-and-White Ball, a signature fundraiser for Precinct2gether. Held at the Bay Area Community Center on Sept. 10, this amazing evening included a catered dinner, raffle, a band and dancing.

Always a highlight of the evening is the presentation of the Jim Fonteno Service to Seniors Award. For 2010, Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia presented the award to Wal-Mart. A long-time supporter of Precinct2gether, Wal-Mart has continually provided both financial and volunteer support for the Seniors, Nursing Home, Youth and Veterans programs.

Precinct2gether would like to thank everyone who generously supported the 2010 Black-and-White Ball.

Things to Know



New amphitheater, picnic area opens at Riley Chambers

Community Leaders joined Commissioner Sylvia Garcia in early October as they celebrated the opening of the newest improvement to Riley Chambers Park located at 808 ½ Magnolia in Barrett Station.

This new amphitheater and picnic area are the result of community meetings and input about facilities the people who use the park would like to see. The result is this public area – available for bookings – that fits within the park’s master plan theme of “Literature and Horse Stories.”



Ready for Super Bowl XLV?

The Super Bowl is always more fun if you’re watching with friends. Come join Precinct2gether at the East Harris County Activity Center on Feb. 6, 2011, for our annual Super Bowl Party. The party kicks off at 4 p.m. and the game will be shown on a big screen. There’s no charge to attend nor reservations needed. Soft drinks will be provided but please bring a dish to share. For more information, call 281-479-4232.

Calling all domino players

Join in the fun and friendly competition of the annual Precinct2gether Domino/“42” tournament which will take place on Thursday, Jan. 27, 2011, at the Grayson Center, 13828 Corpus Christi, Houston, Texas 77015. Sign-in for the tournament will begin at 8:30 a.m. with the tournament getting under way at 9 a.m. and finishing with lunch at noon. Awards will be presented to first, second and third place winners.

Registration deadline is Friday, Jan. 21, 2011. For more information or to register, call the North Channel coordinator at 281-452-7598, South Channel coordinator at 281-479-4232 or the Inner City coordinator at 713-514-0185.

Centers celebrate Black History Month

Black History Month will be celebrated in February 2011 by many organizations including Precinct2gether. On Friday, Feb. 25, the Walker Community Center will be holding a free Black History Program from 9:30 a.m. - 11 a.m. No reservations are required for this event. For more information, call 281-426-3551.

The Barrett Station Community Center is hosting a week-long celebration of Black History Month. Monday, Feb. 14, is Musical Night; Tuesday, Feb. 15, is Play and Poetry Night; Wednesday, Feb. 16, is Soul Food Social; Thursday, Feb. 17, will feature a line dance competition; and the week will wrap up Friday, Feb. 18, with a Senior Prom. These programs will start each night at 6:30 p.m. and will be free for all seniors. Call 281-328-4713 for additional information.

Interested in serving on the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature?

For the past 25 years, the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature (TSHL) has provided seniors an opportunity to become involved with the state’s legislative process. The focus of this group is to advocate for all older Texans. Members of this group are not lobbyists, pay all their own expenses and work extremely hard for those they represent.

The next TSHL election will be held in May 2011. To be eligible, an individual must be registered to vote, 60 years or older and meet state and local residency requirements. Nominations are being accepted to serve as representatives for Harris County Precinct Two and for Harris County at-large. Candidates must file for election between Jan. 1 and Feb. 28, 2011.

If you are interested in running, you must write a letter stating your intent to run and file it with the Area Agency on Aging, 8000 N. Stadium Dr., 3rd Floor, Houston, Texas 77054, between Jan. 1 and Feb. 28, 2011. TSHL Election Day will take place on May 24, 2011. There is a \$5 filing fee and candidates must complete a candidate information form (form number 103) and have a minimum of 25 registered voters age 60 or older who live in the area the candidate seeks to represent sign a petition (form number 105) by the filing deadline. For more information or for the required forms, contact the Area Agency on Aging at 832-393-4301. To learn more about TSHL, visit www.txshl.org.



Precinct Two opens new Pasadena Courthouse Annex

The Precinct Two John Phelps Courthouse Annex, named for local Pasadena businessman and volunteer John Phelps, recently opened at 101 Richey at Highway 225. Coming in

both on time and under budget, the new courthouse will be the home for Precinct Two Commissioner’s area office, the Harris County Tax Assessor Collector’s office, Harris County Juvenile Probation, Environmental Services Division of Public Health, Justice of the Peace Precinct Two, Place Two, and Harris County Constable Precinct Two.

Ceramic arts popular with seniors



Ceramics are one of the oldest art forms, used for both aesthetic enjoyment and in everyday life. Historians have found clay animal and human figures dating back thousands of years and the creation of ceramics continues into the 21st Century.

Creating ceramics is a hobby enjoyed by many Precinct2gether seniors. "The Channelview seniors have been working on ceramics since the center opened," said Toni Drews, director of the Flukinger Community Center. "The seniors love creating their own items to have in their homes or give away for presents. Ceramics also is very popular because it is something that doesn't take a lot of standing or strenuous effort."

While there is not a ceramics class at Flukinger, seniors have access to working on ceramics when the Center is open. The Center is equipped with two kilns, one that can handle large items and another that can fire specialty items such as gold-trimmed ceramics.

Seniors at the San Jacinto Community Center have the opportunity to take a ceramics class as the Center offers a course each Wednesday and Thursday at 9 a.m. While the participating seniors are in a class, they are able to work on their own, creating ceramics they have envisioned.

Seniors learn more about diabetes

According to the American Diabetes Association, 12.2 million U.S. residents 60 years of age or older have diabetes; which is approximately 23 percent of all people in this age group. Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of the disease. When a patient has Type 2 diabetes, the body either does not produce enough insulin or the cells ignore the insulin which is necessary for the body to be able to use glucose for energy. Type 2 diabetes can lead to many other serious health problems including eye, foot and skin complications, hypertension and hearing loss.

To increase seniors' awareness of and education about diabetes, Precinct2gether's social workers program has created a diabetes presentation. The program kicked off with eight presentations in November to coincide with November being Diabetes Awareness month.

"Through this program, we hope to make our seniors aware of the signs and symptoms of diabetes and what they might do to help prevent it in themselves and others," explained Sharon Carter, program social worker for Precinct2gether. "Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States and it is now thought to be a contributing factor in heart disease and stroke. We are not doctors or health professionals, but we are concerned about the prevalence of this disease. We advise anyone who suspects they are at risk for diabetes to contact their physician."

This is the second health-related program created by Precinct2gether's social workers as in 2009, a popular stroke presentation was developed. A final offering of the diabetes program will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 1, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Flukinger Community Center. Anyone interested in learning more about this illness is invited. To learn more about diabetes, visit the American Diabetes Association's Web site at www.diabetes.org.



"Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States and it is now thought to be a contributing factor in heart disease and stroke."

George Watt: “It’s a blessing to belong to this Center”



If there's a chili cook-off at the Flukinger Community Center, there's no doubt that long-time member George Watt will be there. As the founder of the Smokin' 44s Cook-off team, Watt has been an avid supporter and fund raiser for Precinct2gether.

Watt became a member of the Channelview Seniors when he retired from a career working in the local chemical plants in 1998. Over the years, he's participated in numerous cook-offs, been a top seller of raffle tickets, gone on many field trips and made numerous friends. He's also proud to have his name on the George Watt Annual Chili and Bean Cook-off which raises funds for Precinct2gether and the Channelview Senior Citizens. Watt also serves as the chaplain for the Channelview Senior Citizens, offering opening prayers at their meetings.

"I'm always trying to spread the word about Precinct2gether and the Flukinger Center," explained Watt. "We have a great volunteer base and the Center lets seniors make new friends. I really like to see when we have a lot of people come out for our activities like Neighborhood Night Out. The Center also provides many services, such as the homebound meals program, which our local seniors need to know about."

When Watt speaks of Precinct2gether, he also is quick to mention the support he has received from his Flukinger Center family in good and hard times. "When I lost my wife, a celebration of life was held for her and so many people from the Center were there for me," remembered Watt. "The Flukinger Center also was the location where my grandson got married this fall. People involved at the Center are so helpful that it is a blessing to belong."

"I'm always trying to spread the word about Precinct2gether and the Flukinger Center...

We have a great volunteer base and the Center lets seniors make new friends."

Don't ignore your health during the holidays

The holiday season can be such a fun time but it also can be extremely busy and many people have to decide what they can do and what they can't. One thing you can't forget about during the holidays is taking care of yourself and maintaining your health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have the following tips to help you have a health holiday season:

- * Wash your hands often: Keeping hands clean is a critical step to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds. You can use an alcohol-based sanitizer if soap and clean water are not available.
- * Stay warm: Cold temperatures can cause serious health problems for older adults. Stay dry, and dress warmly in several layers of loose-fitting, tightly woven clothing.
- * Watch out for stress: To avoid stress, which can lead to health problems, make sure you don't overcommit or overspend. Get support from family and friends and make sure to maintain a positive, relaxed attitude.
- * Travel safely: Whether you're driving across Harris County or around the world, help ensure your trip is safe. Don't drink and drive, and don't let someone else drink and drive. Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle.
- * Prevent injuries: Injuries from falls and fireworks are common during the holidays. Use step stools instead of furniture when hanging decorations. Leave fireworks to the professionals. Keep candles away from your grandchildren, pets, trees and curtains. Never leave fireplaces, stoves or candles unattended.
- * Preparing your holiday meal: Focus on avoiding food-related illnesses during the holidays. Wash hands and surfaces often. Avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs (including their juices) away from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.





LyondellBasell partners with Precinct2gether for Homebound Road Tour

For the third year, LyondellBasell volunteers are working to make the holidays a bit brighter for participants of the Precinct Two homebound meals program with the "Homebound Road Tour." Ten buses filled with LyondellBasell volunteers and Precinct Two staff will make visits to the approximately 135 seniors who receive meals through the homebound program in Channelview, Crosby and Northshore areas armed with Christmas goodie bags and cheer.

"These visits truly make our homebound seniors so happy," explained Shelly Cooper, Precinct2gether special programs coordinator. "Just having a visitor during the holidays can really brighten a senior's day."

LyondellBasell also hosts annual Christmas parties for seniors at two of their Precinct Two facilities. "We have partnered with Harris County Precinct Two for nearly 30 years to bring holiday joy to neighboring senior citizens by hosting our annual holiday party," said Site Manager Michael VanDerSnick of LyondellBasell's Channelview Complex. "In 2008, we learned that many senior citizens without family were homebound and could not attend our party, so we began our Homebound Tour to visit and let them know they are not forgotten."

CONGRATULATIONS to Royal Pageant winners

On Oct. 8 residents from the Precinct Two nursing homes, family and friends gathered at the East Harris County Activity Center for the second Precinct2gether Royal Pageant. Originally known as "Ms. Golden Years," the pageant was renamed in 2009 to reflect it being open to both women and men from the Precinct Two nursing home communities. Sixteen ladies and 13 gentlemen representing 16 nursing homes participated in the Royal Pageant. Congratulations to Thelma Ruthledge of Afton Oaks Nursing Home and Jonathan Woods of RHC of Baytown Nursing Home who were named queen and king of the Royal Pageant. Precinct2gether thanks every extraordinary contestant who took part in the Royal Pageant.



In this photo are (Front Row) Jonathon Wood, king of the Royal Pageant and Thelma Ruthledge, Queen of the Royal Pageant; (second row) Activity Director Geneva Brown, Nursing Home Director Freda Morris and Activity Director Earnestine Barlow.



Precinct2gether, Inc.
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Houston, TX 77015

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Precinct2gether serves Harris County
Precinct Two seniors in Barrett Station,
Baytown, Channelview, Clear Lake,
Crosby, Deer Park, El Lago, Galena Park,
Highlands, Houston, Jacinto City, La Porte,
McNair, Morgan's Point, Nassau Bay,
North Shore, Pasadena, Seabrook,
Sheldon, Shore Acres, South Houston,
Taylor Lake Village and Webster.

*Precinct2gether, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3)
non-profit organization.*

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North Channel Program
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Nursing Home Program
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South Channel Program
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Barrett Station & Chambers
Community Centers
281-328-4713

Bay Area
Community Center
281-326-2955

East Harris County
Activity Center
281-479-4232

Grayson Community Center
713-455-3660

North East
Community Center
281-442-7950

Ramsey & Flukinger
Community Center
281-457-1810

San Jacinto & Highlands
Community Centers
281-426-7561

Walker Community Center
281-426-3551

**Harris County Precinct Two
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Voucher Transportation
281-326-6013

Veterans Services
281-426-2832 or
281-843-2019